



“Aunt” Nancy building morale of deployed soldiers

By Spc. Lynne Steely

BAGHDAD, Iraq-- Deployments can be an exciting, yet sometimes difficult time for many soldiers. Separation from family and friends, a new culture and changes in living conditions can be a cause of stress. One of the best morale boosters for many soldiers during a deployment may be as simple as letter from home or a carepackage of homemade cookies. During Operation Iraqi Freedom I, Nancy Simioni read a letter from her niece, Capt. Sara Mann, about three soldiers who never received mail and were in need of some cheering up. Mann was deployed to Baghdad at the time with the 18th Military Police Brigade. Simioni was touched by this and was all too eager to help. She asked for the soldiers names and addresses and began sending them candy and cheerful notes of



Sgt. 1st Class Elizabeth Graybill and Nancy Simioni meet face to face for the first time.

support. News spread rapidly around her workplace, and Simioni’s co-workers at General Motors Corporation immediately joined in by sending cards and donating small treats. Soon they began asking about soldiers that their families could “adopt”. Simioni’s caring gesture was rapidly growing into a project beyond her imagination. (cont’d on page 4)



Posing for a picture with Co. Commander Capt. Ludwig and 1st Sgt Arbec are January 28 reenlistees Spc. Lamika Fisher, Sgt. Nadia Gibson and Sgt. Delonda Allen.

Brigade Briefs

• **March Birthdays**

- 01- Spc. Alma Ortiz
- 02- Pvt. Steven Dionne
- 04- Maj. Michael Blahovec
- 12- Cpt. Brian Boston
- 15- Maj. Eric Brunken
- 17- Cpt. Michael Capps
- 17- Pfc. Bradley Swope
- 23- Spc. Lynne Steely
- 29- Maj. Dean Lewis

• Congratulations to Sgt. Delonda Allen, Sgt. Nadia Gibson and Spc. Lamika Fisher on their reenlistment on January 28.

• A ceremony was held for the soldiers of the 18th MP Brigade February 11. All soldiers received a certificate authorizing them to wear the 18th MP Combat Patch for participation in Operation Iraqi Freedom, as well as four patches.

• There will be a diagnostic PT test February 21 and 28.

• A qualification range will take place March 2nd, 3rd and 5th.

Famous February Birthdays

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| 02-1905-John Pershing
Military General | 14-1913-James Hoffa
Union Leader |
| 03-1894-Norman Rockwell
Painter | 16-1905-Robert Frost
Poet |
| 04-1902-Charles Lindbergh
Aviator | 21-1905-Albert Einstein
Physicist |
| 11-1847-Thomas Edison
Inventor | 21-1905-Joseph Stalin
Politician |



Pfc. Dionne, Pfc. Aaron and Pfc. Coleman pose for a picture with Co. Commander, Capt. Ludwig, and 1st Sgt. Arbec following their promotion.

VIGILANT TIMES

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Maj. Rob Simmons.....S-1 OIC
Spc. Lynne Steely.....Photojournalist

COMMANDERS CORNER

By Col. James B. Brown

Greetings families and friends of the 18th MP Brigade! This has



been such an eventful month since our last edition!!! First of all, we played an integral role in the first free elections here in Iraq. While most Soldiers were limited to the base camps for the elections, our Military Police played a critical role in supporting our Iraqi Police partners in securing their communities for the elections. It was a tremendous privilege for I and my team to be out among the Iraqi people and to share in their joy as they voted for the first time! Previous to the election, I was surprised at how few women I have seen in Iraq. On election day, they came out to vote in the millions!

I just want you all to know that through your support of this brigade, you were there as well and together WE are making a positive difference to share the basic rights and freedoms that other people fought to ensure that we enjoy today. During this whole experience, I kept asking myself... "I wonder what the first election in the United States of America was like?" I think I

got to see some of the answers to that question in person on 31 January. I know that many of you only see bad things in Iraq through some of the media coverage. Let me assure you that the Iraqi people are very thankful and excited to have a voice in their present and future! Another highlight here has been the awarding of our combat patch certificates for service with the 18th Military Police Brigade in combat...the 18th Military Police Brigade combat patch has again been awarded to all members of the brigade currently serving in combat. The legacy of this patch and what it means to those who have served in this brigade in combat is something that practically defies description...it is something that has to be felt. It is much like the pride described by a pro-ball player—who after a long and distinguished career finally finds himself playing on a league winning team and earning a world series ring. When I first entered the Army in 1977, I encountered Soldiers then who had the 18th MP Brigade Combat patch. One of the first was SFC Alvin Troyer who had earned the combat patch serving with the 716th MP Battalion in the defense of Saigon during the TET Offensive of 1968. SFC Troyer had also earned the Silver Star in that

action as well. While he didn't carry the Silver Star around with him, the 18th MP Brigade patch was always there on his fatigues to remind all that he had served with the 18th MP Brigade in combat. We now join in the enduring legacy SFC Alvin Troyer and all the other great Soldiers like him who have earned this distinguished patch in combat.

As I write this we are in the final day of the feast of Ashoura. This year the celebration was marred by terrorist attacks, but fewer than the year before. We are making progress with our Iraqi partners and the Iraqi people are making significant gains as they step forward to direct their own destiny. It is a privilege for us to be here and to help them while helping protect our own country as well.

Thank you for all your support to our deployed Soldiers and for your personal gifts. We have shared many a beanie baby and candy bar with the Iraqi children. Those of us who serve in Germany today know how much of an impression our grandparents made when they shared American chocolate and gifts with the German kids after WWII, now its our turn to do the same for the next generation here! Please continue to keep us in your prayers, God has blessed us all so richly! Faithfully yours,
VIGILANT 6

During the fall of 2003, Simioni went on a Detroit radio station in her area encouraging others to help get support to as many soldiers as possible for the holidays by sending cards and letters. Hundreds of people jumped at the opportunity to show their support. Each soldier on "Aunt Nancy's" list was adopted two and three times over!

The project grew quickly as GM and Harley Davidson employees, Veterans, families, scout troops and classrooms all over the United States began writing letters and sending care packages.

Those who heard about Aunt Nancy began submitting

the names of their family and friends who were in the military. A website was donated to Simioni which opened up a larger communication gateway. Troops began submitting their own units for support after finding her website on the Internet.

What began as support for a handful of soldiers within the brigade grew to 10, then 30 and is now a complete support network for over 600 soldiers all over Iraq and Kuwait.

By Christmas 2004 the Aunt

Nancy Adopt-a-Soldier Project had over 1,100 Americans sending support to deployed troops. For the second year in a row, GM employees sponsored a large-scale holiday collection of decorations and goodies, filling 450 Christmas stockings.

The 18th MP Brigade is back in



Baghdad and Aunt Nancy has not forgotten them. When she heard about the deployment she contacted Sgt. 1st Class Elizabeth Graybill, the 18th's Morale, Welfare and Recreation representative who was with the unit during the previous deployment. The two got together while Graybill was on leave in her hometown of Michigan and they planned some holiday cheer for the unit.

Graybill is now the liaison between Simioni and the unit and helps with

distribution of care packages. "I'm glad to help and I really enjoy it," said Graybill. "I really feel I'm the right person for the job."

Simioni's motivation behind this humanitarian effort stems mostly from her teenage years during the Vietnam War and what she viewed as poor treatment and a lack of

support for the troops of her generation. She also remembers the stories her father, a WWII veteran, told about how alone he felt during the war. The emails and letters of appreciation she receives from the soldiers she's helped really keep her going and her spirits high, she said.

When the 18th arrived at Camp Victory in December, there were twenty boxes containing 100 Christmas stockings already waiting from none other than Aunt Nancy and her personal army of dedicated helpers. She has become everyone's Aunt Nancy.

If you want to contribute to the Aunt Nancy Adopt-a-Soldier Project or know a soldier who needs support, you can email her at nancy@auntnancyusa.com. You can visit her website at www.auntnancyusa.com.



Three Iraqi nationals show their ink-stained fingers as proof of voting in Iraq's first democratic election. Soldiers of the 18th MP Brigade were conducting security operations at a polling station in Baghdad on January 30 during the election. (Photo by Army Spc. Michael Prokop)



Staff Sgt. Donald Mays takes some time out to test his strength while Sgt. Gregory stands by for assistance. The weights are located in our company area, and help keep our soldiers in peak physical condition.

Geraldo Rivera...



Geraldo Rivera interviewed Soldiers from the 18th and 42d Military Police Brigade's at Camp Victory during a live two-hour Fox News broadcast covering the Iraqi elections January 31.



Lights, camera, action! Rivera's camera crew hard at work!



18th's Soldiers look at the monitor during a pause as election clips are broadcast.

...live from Camp Victory!

Staff Sgt. Chelsea Spier is grinning from ear to ear as she poses with Rivera after the show.



Pfc. Bradley Swope gets pulled up front for an interview with Rivera live on national television.

Battalion News



BAGHDAD, Iraq--
The 306th Military Police Battalion unfurled their colors during a Transfer of Authority ceremony January 21 at the Abu Ghraib prison chapel. They replaced the 391st MP Battalion out of Columbus, Ohio who have been guardians of the prison since February 2004.



Staff Sgt. Stuckey of the 306th MP Battalion reenlisted following the Transfer of Authority ceremony January 21. General Brandenburg performed the reenlistment.





Photo of the Month

Sunset at Camp Victory. It's amazing the places we can find beauty if we only stop and take the time to see it. This is a view from one of our offices.

(Please send us your photos! We would love to feature it on our photo of the month page!)

Soldiers Speak...

What is a "perfect" Valentine's day for you?



Pfc. Jasbleidick Chancay-

"Me on a beach in Florida with Bruce Willis in a speedo."



Sgt. Norma Hill-

"One dozen roses from my husband ."



Staff Sgt. William Chasteen-

"Being there to see the look on my wife's face when she gets the roses I sent her ."



Sgt. Patrick Henry-

"Being at home with the people I love."

18th MP Soldiers earn combat patch



CAMP VICTORY, Iraq - The Soldiers of the 18th Military Police Brigade received the 18th MP combat patch in a ceremony at their brigade headquarters February 19. The patch, earned for participation in Operation Iraqi Freedom, is worn on the right uniform sleeve. Because the combat patch is earned, it can never be revoked despite the future status of the Soldier, unlike some military awards. All Soldiers also received a certificate signed by the Brigade Commander, Col. James Brown and Command Sgt. Maj. Joseph Shelley.



CONNECTIONS

By Lt. Col. Thomas Evans



The statue in the photo on the left was created by an Iraqi artist named Kalat. For years this man was forced to create hundreds of bronze statues of Saddam Hussein, and his work was displayed all over Baghdad.

Following the overthrow of Saddam's regime, Kalat wanted to show his appreciation for the liberation of his country. He melted three of the heads from his statues of Saddam, and from that metal, sculpted this piece showing an American soldier mourning the death of his comrade, while a little Iraqi girl offers comfort and sympathy.

Election Day showed what the Iraqi citizens wanted. The media reported that the turnout was over 70%. It further reported that 50% of the people expected violence at the polling stations, but that they went to vote anyway.

The Iraqi citizens had no means by which to overturn the very powerful Saddam regime. When he invaded Kuwait in 1990, he had the fourth strongest military in the world. He used that military to keep the citizens of Iraq in check. The dictator government was not "of the people, by the people, and for the people." Saddam sucked wealth from the citizens to build a multitude of palaces for his own pleasure. He used the citizens' skills and resources to support his whims.



An Iraqi woman holds her child while voting at a polling station in the center of Az Zubayr, southern Iraq.

Election Day in Iraq was the culmination of vast amounts of work and planning by the Interim Iraqi Government. Once the people were freed to speak, once they were freed to establish their own government, the citizens of Iraq rose to the challenge. With great risk to themselves and their families, the people have championed their own desire to live free. The radical extremists have used bullets and bombs to try to convince them that they cannot succeed. Election officials were gunned down on the streets and in their homes, but when one fell, another stepped into his place.

The people of Iraq courageously stood in the face of the threats and have demonstrated that they sense the hope that the future holds. The future will not be easy, but nothing of value is.

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

Romans 15:13

Security in Iraq just got easier for the Iraqi Highway Patrol

BAGHDAD, Iraq--The Iraqi Highway Patrol will now be able to secure its nations roadways better than ever.

The IHP received 90 four-wheel drive Chevy Luv extended cab pickup trucks February 9, complete with police essential accessories and ready to hit the road.

Maj. Andrew Johnson and Capt. Steven Caruso of the 18th Military Police Brigades Civil Affairs

Office, coordinated a convoy to escort the vehicles from the port of Umm Qasr in southern Iraq, to IHP headquarters in Baghdad.

Once the IHP are able to provide the necessary security for its highways, the economy should begin to improve, creating more opportunities for the people of Iraq.

This is just the beginning for the IHP as many more improvements are in the planning stages.



IHP leaders (left) shake hands after signing for the new vehicles.

Below, left: The 18th's Capt. Steven Caruso and Maj. Andrew Johnson explain to the IHP the "rules of the road" and how the convoy is going to operate , with the help of a translator, before leaving the port for the long trip to Baghdad. Below, right: The convoy lines up before leaving the port.



JUST FOR FUN...

Presidents Day is February 21. Test your presidential knowledge with this fun trivia quiz!

1. Who was the only president to be unanimously elected?
2. Which presidents picture is on the twenty-dollar bill?
3. Which president held office for only one month?
4. Which president voted for the first time when he was 62 years old?
5. Which president never married?
6. Who was the first U.S. president to receive a patent?
7. This president never attended school.
8. Who was the first left-handed president?
9. Which president's daughter was the Baby Ruth candy bar named for?
10. Name the first American President to win the Nobel Peace Prize.
11. He was the first president to be buried in Arlington National Cemetery.
12. He was the only president with a Ph.D.
13. He was the oldest president ever elected.

ANSWERS
 1. George Washington 2. Andrew Jackson 3. William Harrison 4. Zachary Taylor 5. James Buchanan 6. Abraham Lincoln 7. Andrew Johnson 8. James Garfield 9. Grover Cleveland 10. Theodore Roosevelt 11. William Taft 12. Woodrow Wilson 13. Ronald Reagan

GROUNDHOG DAY



Groundhog Day originated in North America during the late 1800's based on German folklore. Clymer H. Freas, a newspaper editor, and W. Smith, a Congressman and newspaper publisher, organized and popularized a yearly festival in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania featuring a groundhog named Punxsutawney Phil.

The groundhog exits his hole after a long winter hibernation. If its shadow is seen, it returns to its hole predicting six more weeks of winter. If no shadow is seen it stays above ground because spring is near.

VALENTINES DAY

There are so many ways to say I love you!

Ana behibek-----*Arabic*
Mahal kita-----*Filipino*
Ich liebe dich-----*German*
Ti amo-----*Italian*
Aishiteru-----*Japanese*
Sarang Heyo-----*Korean*
Ayor anosh'ni-----*Navaho*
Ya tebya liubliu-----*Russian*
Volim te-----*Serbian*
Eu te amo-----*Portugese*
 *S'agapo*-----*Greek*

TIDBITS

Financial Insider

Retro Enlistment Bonus-

As many as 5,000 soldiers who re-enlisted last year may be eligible for a bonus of up to \$5,000. The bonus will be retroactively paid to soldiers between the ranks of specialist and Staff Sergeant with 17 months to 10 years in service, who re-enlisted between March 18 and Sept. 18, 2003. Only those who re-enlisted under the option of being assigned to a deployed unit in Afghanistan, Kuwait or Iraq are eligible for the bonus. Soldiers have until June 30 of this year to contact their career counselors and request the lump sum payment. (From Military.com)

Military training equals college credit-

You can save tuition dollars when you get college credit for your military training, courses, and occupational specialty. Before contacting the school, make sure to have updated records of all your military coursework and training.

Websites

Help the ones left behind

Deploying soldiers with a beloved pet cat aren't left with many choices unless they have family nearby to care for the animal. Now, you can help by being a foster owner until the soldier returns through Operation Noble Foster. For more information on how you can help go to: www.operationnoblefoster.org

Legal Tips

Soldiers and Taxes-

It's that time of year again; time to file both State and Federal income taxes. Soldiers based overseas have an automatic extension until June 15, and deployed soldiers have a 180 day extension from the time they return from deployment.

If income tax is owed, soldiers will still have to file by April 15 or risk accumulated interest fees. For joint returns, married soldiers who are deployed can give their spouse power of attorney to file the return in the soldiers absence.

Since the soldier receives an extension, their spouse automatically receives an extension when filing a joint return.

Income taxes can be done for free at your post legal assistance office.

Thanks to legal NCOIC SFC Elizabeth Graybill



Downloads

Download a free, animated flag for your computer desktop at:

www.deskflag.com

More websites to check out

www.soldiersangels.org

www.homesforourtroops.org

www.thefreedompage.org

www.showthanks.com

www.defendamerica.mil